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ABSTRACT

In Australian educational policy debate, advocacy of choice and diversity has come to be linked to support for educational markets and therefore with educational reform and restructuring associated with "economic rationalism." This paper argues that choice and diversity are better conceived within a framework of democratic educational philosophy and policy, and shows that in Australian educational policy development this was the case until the arrival of economic rationalism. The history and outcomes of choice in New South Wales are described. The paper argues that critics of "choice" in the economic-rationalist market context are mistaken to oppose choice as such. Rather, the focus should be on the relationship of choice to basic educational values, such as participation, experimentation, and quality of provision. For these values to be realized in a mutually enhancing way, education systems need to promote sets of real options for students and their families. "Choice" is a secondary concept that emerges within this ethical, political, and professional context. "Markets" are only one putative method for achieving educational participation, diversity, and equality, and should not be conflated with advocacy of quality and equity, diversity and choice. It is suggested that the design of educational systems requires a coherent position on educative learning and on diversity and equity, as well as providing new professional purposes for teachers and collaborative decision-making structures for students and parents. Appendices contain sample school entry forms. Contains 32 references. (Author/LMI)

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INTERACTIVE SYMPOSIUM
REAL CHOICE IN EDUCATION:
PUBLIC INTEREST, STATE CONTROL AND PRIVATE FREEDOM

EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS: DEMOCRACY, DIVERSITY AND EQUITY

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Abstract

In Australian educational policy debate, advocacy of choice and diversity has come to be linked to support for educational markets and therefore with educational reform and restructuring associated with "economic rationalism", a powerful policy influence since the mid 1980s. We argue that choice and diversity are better conceived within a framework of democratic educational philosophy and policy, and show that in Australian educational policy development this in fact was the case until the arrival of economic rationalism. Critics of "choice" in the economic rationalist market context are mistaken to oppose choice as such. We argue the focus should be on its relation to basic educational values such as participation, experiment and quality of provision. For these values to be realised in a mutually enhancing way education systems need to promote sets of real options for students, parents and families. "Choice" is a secondary, or derivative, concept which emerges within this ethical, political and professional context: it is itself neither a primitive concept nor a primary value. "Markets" are one and only one putative method for achieving educational participation, diversity and quality and are not to be simplistically conflated with advocacy of quality and equity, diversity and choice. We suggest that the design of educational systems requires a coherent position on educative learning, and on diversity and equity, as well as providing new professional purposes for teachers and collaborative structures for participation by students and parents in decisions about educational policy and practice.

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INTRODUCTION

In introducing this interactive symposium on "real choice in education" we wish to refocus the contemporary debate onto educational diversity, and its relation to equity and quality. We suggest this is the context within which to consider the issue of "choice". We use Australian experience to illustrate the issue as we see it. We argue that there is a prima facie case in favour of diversity, and therefore choice, and that the question then becomes how to achieve it, rather than whether it is desirable. Speaking very generally, there appear to be two main ways of achieving it: through markets and through increased participation in decision making by students, parents, teachers and other members of communities. The issue, simply, is not whether choice, but what kind of choice (Raywid 1992).

In the current debate on educational policy making in Australia, as in other countries, the issue of choice and diversity, particularly on the inter-school as opposed to intra-school level, has been linked with educational reform and restructuring deriving from economic rationalist and managerialist motives usually associated with the introduction of market forms of educational provision. This has led many educators and commentators opposed to economic rationalism and managerialism to oppose choice and diversity as economistic and anti-educational.

We regard this as unfortunate. In this paper we make a case for diversity as an educational value understood within a framework of democratic philosophy. Moreover, we argue that this philosophy is continuous with attempts in the history of Australian educational policy over the past twenty five years to improve the quality and equity of education for all Australian children and young people. Our position is also influenced by recent experience of attempts to increase choice and diversity in Australian schooling, particularly in the state of New South Wales (NSW) which we examine as a case study, arguing for more participative forms of educational governance and decision making.

THE AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT

Well before the economic rationalist domination of educational policy (Marginson 1993, Ch. 3) and the corporate managerialist restructuring of government organisations (Yeatman 1990), the Australian federal government's advisory body on educational policy for the schools sector, the Commonwealth Schools Commission, became interested in choice and diversity in Australian schools. During the years 1979-1984 the Commission conducted a project, in which it invited Australian states to participate, "to explore the potential of increased choice and diversity in government schools for improving schooling." By the end of the project all but one of the Australian states and territories (Queensland) had participated. The results of the project were published in 1985 in the Commission's report *Choice and Diversity in Government Schooling*.

The political and policy context of this project is interesting in numerous respects, but perhaps two stand out. First, the project was conceived and conducted in the spirit of one of Australia's most significant trends in educational policy, that initiated by the Schools Commission itself in 1973 in the watershed *Schools in Australia*, or "Karmel Report" (named after Peter Karmel, the chair of the committee which produced it, and foundation chair of the Commission). This report became the basis for the educational policy of the reformist social democratic Whitlam Labor Government and led to new structures in federal government activity in schooling which lasted until the mid 1980s. Apart from leading to considerably increased federal funding for schools, the Karmel Report was crucial in orienting educational policy towards a set of basic educational values, including equality, participation and diversity. These three, and especially participation and diversity, were seen as closely linked.

Second, the project focused on public, or government provided, education and for a particular reason. Given that diversity was a basic value for educational policy, it was important that all schools, including government schools, were seen to be providing for it. There were two apparent problems standing in the way of this perception (or reality for that matter). One was that in the public mind diversity, or wider options, was what was provided by the private sector, by the independent and religious schools. Government schools were not widely perceived in this way. Another problem was that the move towards comprehensive schools as the norm in government secondary schools in Australia could be seen to reinforce the tendency towards sameness in educational provision.

These points need to be understood in yet another context: that of government funding of non government schools or, in Australian parlance, "state aid". By the 1970s the provision of funds to non-government schools was supported by all major political parties in Australia and implemented at both federal and state levels. That non-government schools provide parents and families with a choice was one of the principal arguments put by supporters of state aid. Supporters of public education, and

therefore of government schools, were concerned to rebut this argument, in order to maintain or extend government schools' share of the education budget and indeed to prevent further extensions of "state aid" to non-government schools. Moreover, there had always been an element of competition between government and non-government schools that went beyond competition for resources to competition for students (Hogan 1984, Ch. 1). Government schools lobbyists rebutted the non-government schools supporters' argument, not by disputing the claim of non-government schools to be providing a choice, but by arguing that in this they were not distinctive: there were also significant choices within government schools and that with appropriate resourcing and support these choices and the diversity which made them possible could be extended and improved.

At the time there was some uncertainty among supporters of government education, not least those who were strong advocates of comprehensive schools, about just how diversity was to be seen as emerging in government schools, and especially about how it should be promoted or, more to the point, how it should be created [1]. One strongly held view was that diversity should be seen as the result of participation by parents, the community and teachers in the construction of educational options. A natural, rather than contrived and imposed, diversity would emerge. Diversity, on this view, was not best seen as operating at the level of system design. (The report did not recommend in favour of "dezoning", or in American parlance "interdistrict choice", but supported "clustering" or "intradistrict choice" of schools to provide greater diversity within clusters.) A corollary of this position was that diversity was seen as operating mainly within rather than between government schools. Whether the one is possible without the other does not appear to have been fully thought through, nor does the question of what kind of diversity increased participation would produce (at least so far as the Choice and Diversity report itself is concerned).

The report's most interesting recommendation was that shared decision making, between administrators, parents and teachers be extended and improved by attention to the processes and skills needed to participate in decision making. Thus participation remained the dominant theme in whose wake choice and diversity were to follow. The work of the Commonwealth Schools Commission continued this participation theme, its next major policy program being the Participation and Equity Program of the federal government, into which the findings of the Choice and Diversity Project were fed. At the same time, national initiatives funded innovation which led to the school based curriculum development movement of the 1980s.

In our view the progressive potential of the Karmel trio of participation, equality and diversity was never fully realised, precisely because the clouded issues we have identified were never resolved: in particular the relation between inter-school and intra-school choice - the "cluster" recommendation was an implicit recognition of this - and the issue of what diversity would emerge when participation was increased along the lines recommended.

From around the mid-1980s advocacy of choice and diversity increasingly became subsumed in another ideological context: the vigorous movement towards expansion of markets in education, common internationally throughout the 1980s and 1990s. This movement has been attacked by supporters of public education in a way which has identified choice and diversity values with economic rationalist thinking. For example, Anderson claims (1994, 20): "The paternity of choice in schooling can be traced to two distinct stables: efficiency and freedom." Anderson then instantly associates this with markets in schooling. He does address the claim that markets improve teaching and learning and concedes that it has "some face validity". His opposition, like that of other commentators, Australian and otherwise, who have had an impact on the Australian debate, is based largely on fears of residualisation effects (Bates 1994, Edwards and Whitty 1994, Snook 1994). This ignores association of choice and diversity with progressive values of participation and experimentation, and so ignores a whole strand of Australian educational policy making.

DEMOCRACY, QUALITY, EQUITY AND DIVERSITY IN EDUCATION

As we said at the beginning of this paper, we regret this characterisation of choice and diversity as essentially aspects of marketisation. In this section of our paper we present an account of these as educational values rooted in a democratic philosophy. In the next section we move back to historical and contemporary issues of educational policy development and implementation in Australia to illustrate the conditions which facilitate the realisation of these values and the conditions which hinder.

Our philosophy has been developed in conjunction with empirical research on school system reforms [2]. Our aim is to provide a general framework within which policy questions, including system design

questions, relating to educational choice and diversity may be discussed and resolved across nations, regions, classes, races, genders and other variables. It also allows for different policies to be generated for different groups - for example, for different countries/nations. Our strategy is to provide a set of basic policy parameters which, if accepted, focus the debate on diversity in the way we have suggested. Critics of "choice" will need to shift, or at least sharpen, the object of their criticism [3].

Our philosophy is a pragmatist (Walker 1987a; Crump, 1995) and problem-based (Nickles 1981; Robinson 1993) approach to educational provision, including the design educational systems, in a democracy (Crump, 1992). In this philosophy, "choice" is neither a fundamental term on its own nor a basic social value or policy goal. It is a necessary element, in the pursuit of other goals, related to purposes of those we shall describe as the "primary clients" of education systems - students, their parents and families - within constraints set by a view of the common good in a democratic society. In using the term "client" we do not intend a traditional professional/client subordination: our usage is compatible with, indeed assumes, collaboration between teachers, students, parents and families. It is an extension of the participation value central to the reform tendency initiated by the Karmel Report. The main points of our approach are as follows.

(1) *The purpose of an educational system* is to enable primary clients to pursue their educational purposes. In order for primary clients to pursue their educational purposes they need to be able to solve problems in the way of achieving their purposes - to discover and employ strategies for achieving their purposes.

(2) *There is a diversity of educational purposes.*

All primary clients have:

- educational purposes, which lead to educational preferences;
- educational problems in the way of achieving their purposes and exercising their preferences; and
- sets of constraints, including opportunities as well as obstacles, within which they must act.

At the same time, different primary clients have:

- different educational purposes, which lead to different educational preferences;
- different educational problems; and
- different sets of constraints.

Nonetheless, given this diversity of purposes, problems and constraints, certain sets of educational purposes and problems and constraints are shared by certain sets of primary clients. Notionally, in a democratic society, equity of access and participation is one such (ethical) constraint.

(3) *The equity constraint.* Our theory of choice and diversity applies to societies committed to pursuing democratic policies in which each primary client will have an equal opportunity to pursue their educational purposes, and in which no educational system will enable any primary client to pursue their educational purposes or solve their educational problems at the expense of other primary clients.

(4) *The common good constraint.* In the absence of structures and processes for securing the democratic culture itself, individual purposes are likely to be pursued at the expense of the common good. The "market form" is often criticised on this ground. Option sets constructed in the purposes of primary clients must minimally be compatible with the legitimate interests of members of society as a whole ("education in a democracy") and must, overall, embed the purpose of maintaining and strengthening that democracy through the education of its future citizens ("education for democracy"). This has implications for education system design and administration as well as teaching, curriculum and assessment.

Here our approach, developed later in the paper, is to account for "common good" as deriving from that set of purposes and problems shared by all members of a society [4] rather than some superordinate and separately justified source of norms and values [5]. Thus we hold that it is quite consistent with requiring education to serve public purposes, for example through education for citizenship, to view education as an extension, with professional help and public resources, of the activities of individuals and families.

(5) *The purposes of secondary clients*. We would argue that legitimate purposes of secondary clients such as governments and corporations reduce to shared purposes of primary clients. For example, employability, as a characteristic of the graduates of an education system desired by employers, is a legitimate purpose for a system inasmuch as primary clients desire educational preparation for employment. (It may also be justified by reference to the common good.) The interests of primary clients are constrained by current labour market conditions, for example; however much they might be better served by a different set of labour market constraints. Nevertheless, the stated purposes of secondary clients will need to be taken into account in system design and if prima facie conflict with primary client purposes appears, the situation resolved within the context of the common good constraint.

(6) *Educational options*. We define an "educational option" as a possible solution to an educational problem. In other words, an option is a means of achieving a purpose within a set of constraints.

Obviously, to be able to pursue their educational purposes all primary clients need options; but, equally, because and to the extent that the educational purposes and problems of primary clients differ, different clients need different options. Moreover, because there are sets of educational purposes and problems shared by certain primary clients, certain option sets will meet the needs of certain sets of primary clients. Similarly, because there are constraint sets shared by certain primary clients, certain option sets will meet the needs of certain sets of parents, families and students.

To take action to pursue an educational purpose and to solve an educational problem all primary clients need to choose an option. To choose an option, a client needs to have a constraint structure enabling them to make that choice. Necessary elements in such a constraint structure are epistemic and material resources. Information and money are probably the key epistemic and material resources [6].

(7) *Equity and diversity*. It follows from our line of thought so far that educational systems need to incorporate different option sets to enable different primary clients to pursue their purposes and solve their problems within their constraint structures. Furthermore, educational systems should include, and articulate with, constraint structures that enable primary clients to choose options relevant to their purposes and problems.

(8) *Educative learning and diversity*. We suggest that development of the capacity for educative learning is a primary purpose for all primary clients. What we mean is that amongst the various possible educational purposes, one educational purpose is fundamental: to learn what it takes to make decisions to pursue all other purposes and solve all other problems on the basis of available information and given available resources (and given other aspects of one's constraint structure). This is the basic characteristic of educative learning.

Educative learning and its outcomes are open ended; the process is exploratory and experimental. It is possible to predict fully neither what its directions might be nor what resources might be required. An educative learning system allows and promotes a diversity of options at all levels. Any educational system which supports such learning is open and encourages a diversity of experiences, including experiences not yet conceived. An educational system that meets the needs of all primary clients (that is, helps them solve their problems and achieve their purposes) is a system that promotes educative learning and therefore promotes and rewards diversity. Educational diversity is achieved through experimentation in educational practice - this requires teachers who are trained, motivated and supported in experimentation. They will have the characteristics of the "extended professional" (Hoyle 1980, Berg 1983) and will see collaboration as the norm rather than the exception in their workplace relationships with colleagues (Hargreaves 1992).

(9) *Student assessment*. Diverse educational institutions and programs require diverse modes of assessment. This does not mean that no common modes of assessment are adequate or acceptable, but that they will be insufficient, and if used alone, will distort legitimate educational purposes.

Common modes of assessment, and certainly centralised assessment, like common (centralised) curricula, are appropriate only insofar as they provide the basis on which experimentation and educative learning can occur. This basis needs to be demonstrated in research, not assumed from cultural tradition, or validated through "mapping" of current (unquestioned) practice.

(10) *Design of educational systems*. There are implications for the needs of clients in general and in particular.

An educational system which, within the constraints we have set, supports the purposes and problem solving of primary clients in general is a system which provides relevant options, including a propensity towards educational diversity (exploration, experimentation, etc.).

An educational system which supports the particular purposes and problem solving of particular sets of primary clients (as defined by their purposes, problems and constraint structures) is a system which provides option sets relevant to their purposes, problem solving and constraint structures.

These two design requirements together imply that information about the purposes of primary clients is taken into account in the structure of the system and that the system is so structured that it remains responsive to developments in clients' purposes. It is probable that as new options emerge in a dynamic and experimental system new purposes will follow. In this respect the system is not purely reactive to external developments but internally creative also.

NEW SOUTH WALES: A CASE STUDY IN "CHOICE" POLICY

Like the USA and Canada, but unlike the UK, Australia's educational provision is the responsibility of states in a federal system. Now whereas in the recent period there has been increased interest and intervention in both school and higher education by the federal government, and there has been increased collaboration through a form of "corporate federalism" (Lingard, Porter, Bartlett and Knight 1995) among the federal partners, in curriculum development for example, policy issues of the kind we are considering are applicable within the decision making made by particular states.

Certain states have had inter-school choice for some time [7]. For example, in Queensland free parental choice of schools has been policy and practice for about eighty years. This has led to some competition for students between secondary schools but little between primary schools where there is overwhelming preference for the local school. The only major constraint on going to an out of area school is transport costs. In the Australian Capital Territory, with an education system which has prided itself on its enlightenment and had a reputation for being "progressive" freedom of school choice had been a feature of the system since the early 1970s, although "within practicable limits". The limits amount to a preference for local area children in a school's enrolment policies, and after that openness to "as many other pupils who wish to come to the school as may reasonably be placed" (IACTSA 1973, 2). The justification for this policy was parents' right to choose a school appropriate for their children's needs of which parents were deemed the best judges. This, then, is an educational needs basis rather than unalloyed parental rights, although in practice it amounts to the same thing. In the ACT the principle of school choice is said to apply to:

(i) choice between government, Catholic and independent school systems;
(ii) choice between schools within each school system;
(iii) choice of educational programs within schools within each system.
(ACT Schools Authority 1985.)

NSW is Australia's largest state, with the largest government education system in the country. "Choice" was introduced in NSW in 1989 following the election of a conservative (Liberal/National Party Coalition) government and the efforts of a dynamic and controversial reforming Minister for Education, Dr Terry Metherell, though the previous Labor government had started an experimental open access scheme senior high school in a working class community. Choice strategies in the 1990s are designed around the expansion of government selective schools, the specialisation of secondary schools into areas such as technology, foreign languages and performing arts, the development of specialist senior high schools and the declaration of certain schools as "centres of excellence". More than half of all government secondary schools in NSW have been granted such a profile in the context of open enrolment. The possibility of choosing between these options, however, is limited for the majority of families and the outcomes of dezoning and diversity of provision are patchy and ambiguous.

Further, a restricted access market has always existed in NSW. We spoke earlier of the availability of non-government schools in Australia: there has always been the option of non-government education for those who can pay the fees. There has, too, always been choice between government schools for those families who could afford to choose where they live on the basis of the quality of the local government school. In many cases the second option is more expensive than the first. In these respects NSW has been similar to other Australian states. But in NSW before 1989 those who could afford neither to move nor pay fees had imposed on them a policy of assignment of their children to designated state schools within bureaucratically demarcated geographical areas, through zoning.

While opponents of dezoning argue that it breaks up communities, in NSW the reverse has also been the case. Even before the 1989 reforms many communities were split down the middle of the street with friends sent by inflexible regulations to different co-educational schools or to separate single-sex schools. Even now, in 1995, when students move from primary to secondary schools in the NSW government system they are told their "designated school" (see Appendix). Designation is decided according to their primary school, not their home address. This system suffers the same design deficiencies as previous zoning arrangements. Moreover, it is the state system, rather then parents, that is splitting up friends and communities.

Considered historically, designation to schools may have been defensible: in the aftermath of World War Two the priority was to find sufficient places for all children (see Appendix and Walford 1994). In NSW, a child lost their place in a secondary school if they did present at the school immediately. This, however, no longer justifies the policy.

Vick (1994, 19) demonstrates how schooling has been directly linked to the production of local communities since the mid-nineteenth century. Unfortunately, there has been a tendency in historical research on education for the local level to be "irrelevant and ignored, or explored but dismissed as unimportant if indeed not actually an impediment to the development of modern schooling". Vick argues that the development of public education over the last one hundred years, in purpose-built accommodation, played an important role in constructing the geographical, cultural and political nature of local society and its relation to the state. Clearly, not all of this was as benign as nineteenth century educational policy and legislation suggests. Further, there are direct parallels between the intent and consequence of nineteenth century and contemporary reforms to the (educational) relationship between the individual and the state.

Recent "choice" policy in NSW public schools has been equivocal and constrained by bureaucratic and industrial regulations and procedures. In the 1970s and 1980s there was increased intra-school curricular choice through school-based curriculum development. There remained little opportunity for inter-school choice, however, on curriculum grounds. Zoning remained for all but a select few who could manipulate or corrupt the system. Few Australian states and territories have explored the level and range of options current in the USA (Witte 1991, Raywid 1992) or the types of strategy set loose by the Education Reform Acts for England and Wales in the 1980s (Walford 1994) [8].

The longstanding market for the select few in NSW public schools, that preceded the dezoning policy of the 1980s, shows that diversity has allowed and fostered choice of school and arguably improved conditions for those who could participate. Such schools have been popular because parents have wanted what they offer (an outcome parents have been seeking since the 1960s). NSW Government "choice" policy in the 1980s, however, was not based on evidence of what parents wanted: it did not meet the system design requirement which we have argued follows from our theory of educational quality and equity. This is not to say that parents did not want what they got: some parents have been happy. "Choice" policy was based on the state's analysis of what would produce certain educational outcomes and raise the standards of those outcomes.

These policy moves have had only limited consequences, however, for expansion of options for students, parents and families. This is because the practice of informal policy for dezoning (i.e. what individual principals and parents do, often regardless of and sometimes in direct opposition to formal policy) has had patchy outcomes. The government has not been bothered: policy outcomes are more important than individual family desires and dilemmas.

Stated choice values have not been realised to any great extent in NSW because the Education Ministry, the Department of School Education and the major teacher unions continue to dominate the construction and definition of "choice" in ways that suit their organisational interests over and above the interests of students, parents and families. Evidence for the failure to realise the stated values of choice rhetoric in government schools includes:

- while schools are formally dezoned, access is limited in other ways;
- the middle class gains most by monopolising well resourced schools;
- curriculum within and between schools offers few real options;
- teachers reject merit selection, thus preventing the development of diverse pedagogic cultures;
- school system and union bureaucrats and academics oppose and obstruct choice policy;
  where choice is available option sets have been constructed so that it is parents who are the choosers rather than students; and
- schools continue their function of societal structuring and stratification.

Further evidence is that in response to increased competition from the state sector independent, alternative and religious schools have broadened their profile. Since there are now many more selective schools in the state system the middle class can send their children to these rather than pay fees at private schools. The government system keeps its bright students, as Dr Metherell intended. The broadened profile of non-government schools includes specialist remedial classes, even in schools which, in the public mind, remain elitist institutions for the bright and rich. Competition, therefore, has led independent schools to introduce wider internal choice to maintain market share. One result is that old social, cultural, religious and class divisions are breaking down because families are increasingly sending different children to different schools/systems according to the needs and interests of the children.

From the government's point of view, choice is conceived and diversity of provision constructed on beliefs about what various groups, or categories of student lack, or need to be supplied with from an economic point of view, rather than on beliefs about open experimentation to create new alternatives alongside students, parents and families. There are of course current possible options other than what we have so far described in NSW, which we consider before moving on to consider a broader approach, consistent with our philosophy, for extending participation and diversity.

CURRENT OPTIONS

Comprehensive schooling

Comprehensive schools have had points in their favour but they are not presently an option nor are they likely to be in the foreseeable future, and certainly not in the form in which they have existed in the past. They have always had a problematic existence, particularly in systems including other types of school. In the 1980s Ball (1984, 1-17) described comprehensives in the U.K. as in crisis and as an idea that not only had "a difficult birth" (Hargreaves 1961, 161) but as subject to "a continuing process of weakening and undermining" so that "the survival of the comprehensive system, such that it is, remains in doubt". The same could be said of NSW. Further, comprehensive structures have not meant comprehensive curriculum, as schools have remained academically exclusive, forcing mixed groupings into the same site without accommodating difference between students. In NSW it is dubious that comprehensive schooling markedly increased teacher experimentation and continuing development of diversity and new options.

Specialisation

The demise of comprehensive secondary schools in NSW was the stimulus for the re-establishment of specialist schools, earlier versions of which had existed in the 1950s. This has meant the introduction of technology high schools and increased numbers of academically selective high schools and single sex schools. In NSW, schools currently specialise in other areas such as sport, creative arts, languages and in offering curriculum programs linked to business. While this option has been reasonably successful and popular in that it appears to meet student purposes and abilities, it raises equity and justice issues if access is not available to all students. While we support this option, we have argued that the equity constraint has not been satisfied.

Privatisation

While roads, hospitals, airports and even water services have been privatised in many countries since the 1980s, sweeping privatisation (as distinction from marketisation) for the compulsory years of education has rarely if ever been a serious contender. In NSW this has been further underscored in that schools during this period underwent politicisation and ministerialisation in order that the state might increase its impact on what schools do, indeed what they are. While funding of the NSW education system, like many others, was devolved in order to make the use of funds more cost effective, and thus education less expensive, per capita, for the state, and while the responsibility for raising additional funds at the local level increased, public education is not generally a profitable enterprise at primary and secondary levels, unless a school is very successful in niche marketing. In NSW there is a degree of de facto privatisation in the form of a government subsidy of up to 66% of a non-government school's operating costs and additional money for capital works. In this context, there is no need to have a public exchange of money through vouchers.

Home schooling

Legally defined in the 1990 Education Reform Act (No.8) for NSW, home schooling is a genuine option for families unsure of the benefits of mass public schooling or unwilling to place their children in school settings where parents lose nearly all control over what happens. While not numerically significant, home schooling is more than an option taken up by "alternative" subcultures. It provides an "out" - the exit option - for families who believe the constraints of systemic schools prevent pursuit of their

purposes as primary clients, or create more problems than they can solve. (More common are one-off parent controlled schools. Many of these are based on religious beliefs, some on educational theories such as those of Montessori or Steiner.) Children in NSW must attend a registered school (or enrol in government provided distance education) by the age of six. But the NSW Department of School Education employs an officer to certify that home schooling, if chosen, is adequate or appropriate.

CONCLUSION: THE CONTINUING DEBATE ON CHOICE AND DIVERSITY

We have argued that, at least in the Australian case, the debate has become diverted if not derailed by the concession of choice and diversity as values belonging to the libertarian right, and that this is regrettable since diversity, in its relation to participation, equity and quality is a basic touchstone value and that once we grant diversity choice follows. The debate should not be about whether choice and diversity are desirable, but about how to achieve them. The need is for the education profession to be able to take a lead in working with parents, students and their families to construct the options which are relevant to their purposes within the constraints of equity and the common good. We seek to reorient the debate in this direction.

We are hopeful that thinking of school and system design and organisation as a task not only of constructing such options but of constructing the conditions of possibility for them to be developed by teachers and primary clients provides a way forward. Accepting this direction means that neither a free market unregulated by government nor a bureaucratically organised system with no intra or inter-school choice is compatible with the philosophy we have outlined. What is required is a government regulated system where the profession, parents and the community can collaborate in the construction of option sets. The result is likely to have elements of the market form, in that there will be schools and elements within schools between which primary clients can choose and whose survival, to that extent, will depend on clients' choosing them. It will have characteristics of experimentation and diversity which are encouraged not just by appeal to clients but by public policy and material support. It will be accountable to representative bodies - not necessarily legislatures or bureaucracies, but community bodies more directly representative of the interests of primary clients and of the common good. The construction of such bodies is clearly a matter of first importance and is at the forefront of our agenda of restructuring and change.

In pursuing this agenda we look for actual examples from around the world of attempts, in the spirit of our democratic philosophy, to construct systems and schools of this kind. We believe there are such examples, but in the spirit of the interactive symposium we leave it up to participants to identify and debate them. We also look to further research to consider the consequences for participation, diversity, equity and the common good of attempts to introduce greater measures of choice into access and participation in education.

NOTES

1. We are grateful for helpful comments by Lyndsey Connors on issues discussed in this part of the paper.
2. We wish to acknowledge funding for Crump's research provided by the Australian Research Council and the University Research Grants Scheme at the University of Sydney. Permission for the research was granted by the Metropolitan East Region of the NSW Department of School Education.
3. We think that this refocus will not necessarily be unwelcome to the critics of marketisation in education. For example, in his thorough research on this topic Ball sometimes appears to identify choice with the market form of provision (1994, Ch. 7, passim) but also wants to criticise markets for failing to provide real choice (1994), p. 110). In making this criticism, as a substantive rather than a purely logical point, Ball is implicitly supporting diversity and choice in the sense we have outlined. Similarly, in his excellent and extensive review of school choice policy and practice in the USA, Cookson (1994) lumps choice and markets together much of the time, and clearly has reservations about markets; nevertheless he concludes his book with a recognition of the need for educational diversity, the right of students, parents and families to exercise some control over the education they get, through choice, and a participative plan for controlled choice.
4. The limitation of common good to individual societies, understood as populations living within the borders of nation-states is of course increasingly problematic. Whereas some such good may be reasonably conceived as nation-state specific, many cannot. Forms of democratic government, including the government of education, must be developed which transcend the boundaries of states. For some preliminary discussion of the political problems see Burnheim 1985, Held 1991; for an educational dimension see Walker 1987, 1990. It has been pointed out, whether in celebration or criticism, that markets are intrinsically international. If this is an advantage, it should not be seen as limited to the market form.

5. Our position here is not to be confused with "public choice" theory. Our method is one of identifying shared problems not, in the first place, identifying, aggregating, analysing or otherwise theorising about individual preferences. We are certainly not advocating treating political and policy processes as if they were markets (Reisman 1990).
6. The Alum Rock experience demonstrates the importance of information resources for parents in ensuring that school choice schemes have equitable results, and that once information is available in forms appropriate to each social group, equity is not impossible to achieve. Nor is it impossible to provide information in such appropriate forms (Lines 1993, Cookson 1994, p. 75).
7. Writing in 1992 Braithwaite pointed out that one of the critical issues in this regard is whether there is evidence that choice of school per se promotes excellence for all students. The research on school effectiveness, and on isolating school effects from other effects is in its early stages and further research and practical experimentation is clearly required.
8. NSW was not typical of Australian states in its zoning policy. Queensland has not had zoning for many years and the Australian Capital Territory has never had zoning since its establishment of its own educational system in 1972.

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APPENDICES
[school entry forms]

Department of Education,

Sydney, 1933

(*Date*) .....

DEAR SIR OR MADAM,

I have to state that as a result of the last Primary Final Examination,

Irene . O. Anderson

will be admitted to the Marrickville

Inter High School

on presentation of this document to the Principal, together with a signed undertaking (form appended) that the pupil will continue at School long enough to complete at least three years of the secondary school course.

This offer will remain open until 2nd February, 1933, after which date any places which are not then taken up will be filled by other candidates, unless the Principal of the School is notified in writing of the intended late enrolment of the pupil, and the reason therefor.

I have to add that, owing to limitations in the seating accommodation, and the number of candidates seeking admission to Secondary Schools, the candidate's retention as a pupil will be dependent upon the receipt of favourable reports regarding conduct, attendance, and progress of school work.

Yours faithfully,

J. R. Thomas.

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Director of Education.

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[redacted]

METROPOLITAN EAST REGION

CHOICE OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS - YEAR 7, 1995
APPLICATION FORM

This form is to be completed by parents/guardians of students who will enter Year 7 in 1995. Please read the accompanying information for parents. *This form applies to all high schools including technology and languages high schools but not to selective or specialist high schools.*

A. STUDENT INFORMATION

Family Name Crump Date of Birth 18.2.83

Given Names James Male Female (tick one)

Address 11 Louden St Canada Bay Post Code 2046

Parent/Guardian Name Christine Crump Telephone _____

Present School Abbotsford **Designated local high school** Concord
(Primary Principal to complete)

B. LOCAL GOVERNMENT HIGH SCHOOL PLACEMENT

I wish to enrol my child at the local high school named in Section A

Signature of Parent/Guardian _____ Date _____

C. NON-LOCAL GOVERNMENT HIGH SCHOOL PLACEMENT

I wish my child to be considered for enrolment at the following non-local high schools. **(Complete in priority order).**

CHOICE 1: _____ CHOICE 2: _____

CHOICE 3: _____ CHOICE 4: _____

I understand that if no place is available at any of the above non-local schools my child will be placed in the designated local high school named in Section A. **I have completed the back of this form.**

Signature of Parent/Guardian _____ Date _____

D. SELECTIVE HIGH SCHOOLS

I have also applied for the following selective high schools, agricultural high schools, Conservatorium High School or Newtown High School of the Performing Arts:

_____

E. PLACEMENT NOT REQUIRED

My child will attend a non-government/interstate/overseas school next year. **(tick one)**

Signature of Parent/Guardian _____ Date _____

Sample Interview Data, November 1994 (Baysview Community)

DR CRUMP: Does all this fit into the notion of school choice, being able to chose, I mention there you have changed schools there because you have moved, I have done that with my child three times too, but the notion that there is no zoning any more, you can choose?

ANSWER: There really is zoning. From my own experience there is zoning.

ANSWER: That happened to us, our previous move that happened to us - -

DR CRUMP: Where you are on the wrong side of the road, so - -

ANSWER: One school was closed to out of zone enrolments so we couldn't choose, we had to send our child to a particular school. I mean, how we choose the schools for our children was we drove around and we looked at the two schools that were closest, and we said, "We don't like the look of that one".

ANSWER: But you talk to people and different people tell you totally different things about the same school, so how do you know? And once your children are in a school and they are happy and they are settled, you want to think very carefully about moving them because you think another school might be better. I wouldn't do that, our kids have been moved around enough already, and I don't want to do it to them any more.

ANSWER: You don't want to really be in a position of choosing a school that is geographically not very handy. I am a big believer in being able to walk to school, and a lot of people from our area particularly go to another school. You would have to drive them both ways.

ANSWER: I don't drive, so I have never been one to go out of my own area, simply because of that.

ANSWER: All your friends are in the area too, if you are all walking to school you are more likely to have friends nearby, and the socialisation is very important.

ANSWER: Those issues are really important.

DR CRUMP: Jan, would you like to - -?

ANSWER: The child has just started high school, when he started kindergarten at a particular school he was very unhappy in the first two years. In fact, his behaviour just deteriorated and he was getting blamed for things he didn't do. I talked to the headmistress and asked that he be changed classes, etcetera, but they wouldn't do it, and it became just such a point that he wouldn't go to school any more, bed wetting - and so a friend recommended another school out

of our area, but not far. So I rang up the infant's mistress and she said, "Look, dear" - she said, "I do have two vacancies, but my priority is people who live in the area, I have to do that." So I rang the Education Department and had to just explain the situation, and that my child was going to be a psychotic. He was going to need strong counselling if I didn't do something soon, and so they said yes, I could do it.

So I was able to get the child into that school and he never looked back, and I had good rapport with teachers whereas I didn't with the other school. Then other friends who were very unhappy with the school where my child started and wanting to get into another school, they have been told, "Look, you haven't got a hope unless there is a really big problem", so they do give priority to the local children.

They have a waiting list, and then once all the local children are taken - I found this with other schools too - once the locals are taken if there are vacancies then the first on the waiting list outside of the zone can go in.

So really, you still have zoning, don't you?

DR CRUMP: It is not the schools that are good or bad in your opinion, it is only the people there, isn't it?

ANSWER: Of course.

DR CRUMP: If those people go to another school, if the good people go to a bad school you will end up with another good school.

ANSWER: Yes, it is just the staff, and school reputations change, they go up and down from private to public.

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